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MEXICAN CODICES: A LIST OF RECENT REPRODUCTIONS

By M. H. SAVILLE

One of the most important sources of information for the study of ancient Mexico is found in the existing pictorial and hieroglyphic codices, or books. As is well known, several of the tribes of Mexico had attained a degree of culture at the time of the Spanish conquest that led to the recording of events of national importance and much that related to their religion, not only on stone bas-reliefs and sculptures, but on material of a more perishable nature.

They made books, which have been generally called codices, on strips of deerskin, the surface of which was covered with a thin coating of stucco. These were folded screen-fashion, and the paintings were on both sides. They had furthermore invented a kind of paper. In Yucatan and the Maya territory this paper was made from the membrane of a tree, and I am tempted to quote from Peter Martyr the description he gives of the books which were seen by him, and of the way in which they were made. He says:

“ They do not bind their books as we do, leaf by leaf, but they extend one single leaf to the length of several cubits, after having pasted a certain number of square leaves one to the other with a bitumen so adhesive that the whole seems to have passed through the hands of the most skilful bookbinder. Whichever way this book was opened, it would always present two sides written and two pages appear, and as many folds, unless you extend the whole of it. . . . The leaves of these books upon which they write are made of the *membrane* of trees, from the substance that grows beneath the upper bark, and which they say is very scarce. It is not like that found in the willows or elms, but such as is found inside of certain edible palm trees, and which, re-

sembling coarse cloth, grows between the intersecting leaves precisely like network. These porous membranes they fill up with bitumen and render them pliable and stretch to whatever form they please, and being made hard again they cover them with a certain kind of *gypsum*."

In Mexico proper, in addition to bark-paper, a paper was made from the leaves of the maguey plant, *Agave Americana*. This paper they also sized with a thin coating of lime. One of the things which impressed Cortés, when he first came in contact with the messengers sent out by Montezuma, was that some of them were busily employed in making paintings of the Spaniards, their costumes, arms, and the different objects of interest, giving to each its appropriate color. These were to convey to Montezuma an idea of the conquerors in picture-writing, and is the first notice we have of its existence in ancient America.

Unfortunately, after the conquest the misdirected zeal of the missionaries resulted in the destruction by fire of the greater number of these old books in order to alienate the natives from their superstitions and beliefs in their pagan gods. In Yucatan nearly one hundred Maya books were burned at Mani by order of Bishop Landa, while in Mexico the treasures of Texcoco, the chief seat of ancient learning in the valley of Mexico, were ruthlessly destroyed by order of Zumarraga, the archbishop.

Shortly after this, however, we learn that on two different occasions the oldest Indians and those understanding most concerning the ancient things were brought together and represented in paintings these things, while others gave an explanation in Nahuatl of these same paintings, and finally the immortal Father Sahagun, without whose work we should know little concerning the religious beliefs of ancient Mexico, translated the Nahuatl text into Spanish, forming at the same time a Nahuatl glossary. Until now only a Spanish translation has been published, made, without doubt, from the codex formerly belonging to the Monastery of Franciscans and today in possession of the Real Academia de Historia in Madrid. The other parts of the work remain

unpublished. One of these exists in the Biblioteca del Palacio, Madrid, and the other is in Florence. This work of Sahagun, the prototype of the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, we are happy to say, will shortly be published under the editorial supervision of the learned Mexican scholar, Troncoso. (See note 2 near the end of this paper.)

Another codex which is of great value is called the *Mendoza Codex*, or *Codex Mendocino*, which was made in somewhat the same way as the one just referred to, but by order of Viceroy Mendoza for Charles V. The original, on maguey paper, is lost, but a copy on European paper is in the Bodleian Library, Oxford.

These works are similar in their post-Columbian origin to the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, and I have dwelt somewhat on them to emphasize the fact that two classes of codices exist—those made on deerskin and on paper before the discovery of America, and those made shortly after the conquest either on maguey paper or European paper with written explanations of their meaning. They form the key to our knowledge of the old Mexican people. Of this class of codices there are the two before mentioned,—*Codex Sahagun* and *Codex Mendoza*,—and in addition there is a valuable unpublished work in Florence shortly to be brought out by the Peabody Museum, to which Troncoso has given the name of *Codex Nuttall* in honor of the accomplished woman who has been instrumental in its production—Mrs Zelia Nuttall. (See note at the end of this paper.) There is a fragment of a similar work in the National Library at Paris, formerly the property of Goupil, by whom it was presented to the library. It has been published in an inferior manner as an appendix to the work of Duran. There is also in the Paris library the *Codex Telleriano-Remensis*, and in Rome is preserved the *Codex Vaticanus 3738*.

Both of these classes of codices, the pre-Columbian and the post-Columbian, contain records of Nahuatl history, including

migrations, the succession of chiefs, conquests, and tributes, also the ritual employed by the priests in fortune-telling; the sacred calendar, and records of fixed and movable religious festivals, as well as astronomical material. These works remained practically buried to the world until about sixty years ago when Lord Kingsborough published in his great volumes a few of the codices which had escaped destruction and had found their way from time to time into the libraries and private collections of Europe. The books, however, cannot be studied to the best advantage in Kingsborough, because Aglio, the artist who was employed in copying them, not understanding anything of their contents, in some instances has given the wrong sequence to the pages and in very many cases has given the wrong color to figures. It is also to be noted that since Kingsborough's time a number of hitherto unknown codices have been found. It is desirable that they should be published in their original form; that is, in the case of the greater number of pre-Columbian codices, in long strips, folded screen-fashion and painted on both sides.

It is only during the last fifteen years that an attempt has been made to reproduce these priceless records in exact facsimile, so far as their original form is concerned. In 1892 the first codex appeared in this manner, being the *Maya Codex Cortesianus*, published in Madrid.

During the last six years a great impetus has been given to the study of these codices by the reproduction of a number of the books which were first brought out by Kingsborough. Students of anthropology, and especially of ancient America, owe a debt of gratitude to the Duke of Loubat for the excellent manner in which he has had these reproductions made and for their generous distribution among the great libraries and museums of the world, whereby they are made practically available for careful investigation and study.

The following list may be useful to the student of ancient Mexican history, and it indicates the increased interest in this

branch of American archeology. Nearly all of the more important codices are now within the reach of students, and we may confidently look forward to the clearing up of many obscure points in Mexican mythology, due to the wide distribution of these facsimiles and the ever-increasing activities in the field of American anthropology, both in Europe and in America.

1885

MAPPE TLOTZIN.—A painting, on prepared skin, relating to pre-Columbian Nahuatl history, with explanation written in the Aztec language; in the Aubin-Goupil collection, National Library, Paris. Published in Paris in *Mémoires sur la Peinture Didactique et l'écriture des Anciens Mexicains*, par Aubin.

MAPPE QUINATZIN.—A painting on maguey paper relating to pre-Columbian Nahuatl history, with explanation written in the Aztec language; in the Aubin-Goupil collection, National Library, Paris. Published in Paris in *Mémoires sur la Peinture Didactique et l'écriture des Anciens Mexicains*, par Aubin.

1886

LIENZO OF JUCUTACATO.—An ancient painting on native cloth from the district of Uruapan, Michoacan. Published by Dr Nicolas León in the *Smithsonian Report* for 1886, Part I., with a study of its contents.

MAPA DE TEPECHPAN.—A painting, on maguey paper, relating to the history of the Aztecs. In the Aubin-Goupil collection, National Library, Paris. Published without colors, in *Anales* of the Museo Nacional, Mexico, tomo III, entrada II.

1887

CODEX PERESIANUS.—A pre-Columbian Maya codex preserved in the National Library, Paris. Published by Leon de Rosny, with an introduction.

1890

TRIBUTE ROLL OF MONTEZUMA.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Museo Nacional, Mexico. Published by Dr Antonio Peñafiel in *Monumentos del Arte Mexicano Antiguo*. (See note on the "Tribute Roll of Montezuma," published in *Transactions* of the American Philosophical Society.)

CODEx SANCHES SOLIS.—A pre-Columbian codex in possession of Baron Waecker-Gotter in Germany. Published by Dr Antonio Peñafiel in *Monumentos del Arte Mexicano Antiguo*.

LIENZO DE (AMOLTEPEC) YOLOTEPEC.—A pre-Columbian painting on cloth preserved in the American Museum of Natural History, New York. Published by Dr Antonio Peñafiel in *Monumentos del Arte Mexicano Antiguo*, from an inexact tracing.

MEXICAN PICTURE CHRONICLE OF CEMPOALLAN.—A post-Columbian codex, on maguey paper, in possession of Bernard Quaritch, London, and published by him.

1891

DOCUMENTS POUR SERVIR A L'HISTOIRE DU MEXIQUE.—A catalogue of the Aubin-Goupil collection of pre-Columbian and post-Columbian codices and maps. With an atlas of eighty plates of reproductions without colors. Published in Paris under the editorship of Eugène Boban. This collection is now preserved in the National Library, Paris, and comprises 403 pieces, many of which, however, are manuscripts.

1892

CODEx PORFIRIO DIAZ.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Museo Nacional, Mexico; published in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*.

CODEx BARANDA.—A post-Columbian codex preserved in the Museo Nacional, Mexico; published in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*.

CODEx DEHESA.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Museo Nacional, Mexico; published in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*.

LIENZO DE TLAXCALA.—A post-Columbian series of paintings on cloth; published in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*, from a copy in the Museo Nacional, Mexico. The original is lost.

TRIBUTE ROLL OF MONTEZUMA.—In *Transactions* of the American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, N. S., vol. XVII, Part ii. Six plates, reproducing paintings on maguey paper preserved in the library of the Society. The first four are fragments of pages from the original Tribute Roll, which is in the Museo Nacional, Mexico. A facsimile of this codex, minus the four leaves, which are supplied from a poor copy on European paper, is published by Dr Peñafiel in his *Monumentos del Arte Mexicano Antiguo*, Berlin, 1890.

CODEX BECKER (MANUSCRIT DU CACIQUE).—Published in Geneva by Henri du Saussure.

CODEX COLOMBINO.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Museo Nacional, Mexico; formerly known as the Codex Doremberg. It is unquestionably a part of the Codex Becker. Published by the Mexican government in *Antigüedades Mexicanas*.

CODEX CORTESIANUS.—A pre-Columbian Maya codex preserved in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional, Madrid. This codex is folded screen-fashion and was the first to be reproduced in this manner in exact facsimile of the original. (It is to be regretted that all of the reproductions in this list are not published in their original form.)

CODEX DRESDENSIS.—A pre-Columbian Maya codex preserved in the Dresden Library. Published by Dr E. Förstemann.

1893

DIE MEXICANISCHEN BILDERHANDSCHRIFTEN ALEXANDER VON HUMBOLDT.—A series of paintings on maguey paper preserved in the Royal Library, Berlin. Published by Dr Eduard Seler with a study, in German, of their contents.

CODEX DE 1576.—A post-Columbian codex in the Aubin-Goupil collection, National Library, Paris. Published by Leroux.

1895

CODEX FERNANDEZ LEAL.—A pre-Columbian codex now in the collection of Mr E. J. Molera, San Francisco. Published in Mexico by Dr Antonio Peñañiel.

1896

CODEX VATICANUS, NO. 3773.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Vatican Library, Rome. Published by the Duke of Loubat, and the first of the superb reproductions which he has so lavishly distributed to libraries and museums.

1897

MANUSCRITO AMERICANO NUM. 4.—A post-Columbian codex preserved in the Royal Library, Berlin. Published in Mexico by Dr Antonio Peñañiel.

1898

MAPA DE CUAUHTLANTZINCO, OR CODEX CAMPOS.—A post-Columbian series of paintings preserved in Cuauhtlantzinco, near Puebla. Published as Bulletin III, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, by Prof. Frederick Starr.

CODEX BORGIA.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Ethnographical Museum of the Vatican, Rome. Published by the Duke of Loubat. An exhaustive treatise on this codex was written at the close of the eighteenth century by P. José Lino Fábrega, and was published, with parallel texts in Italian and Spanish, in the *Anales* of the Museo Nacional, Mexico, in 1900.

1899

CODEX BORBONICUS.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the library of the Chamber of Deputies, Paris. Published for the first time by the house of Leroux. An exhaustive study of its

contents, in Spanish, was published in Florence by Sr Francisco del Paso y Troncoso, Director of the Museo Nacional of Mexico.

CODEx COSPIANO (formerly BOLONIA).—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the library of the University of Bolonia. Published by the Duke of Loubat.

CODEx TELLERIANO-REMENSIS.—A post-Columbian codex preserved in the National Library, Paris. Published by the Duke of Loubat.

1900

LIENZO DE ZACATEPEC.—A pre-Columbian painting on cloth from the Mixteca, State of Oaxaca. Published in Mexico for the first time by Dr Antonio Peñañiel.

CODEx VATICANUS, No. 3738 (RIOS).—A post-Columbian codex preserved in the Library of the Vatican, Rome. Published by the Duke of Loubat.

TONALAMATL AUBIN.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the National Library, Paris. Published by the Duke of Loubat with an exhaustive study of its contents in German by Dr Ed. Seler. Translated into English and published in London in 1901.

1901

CODEx FEJÉRVÁRY-MAYER.—A pre-Columbian codex preserved in the Free Public Museums, Liverpool. Published by the Duke of Loubat. An exhaustive study of its contents by Professor Seler is now in press. (See page 546 of this magazine.)

PINTURAS JEROGLIFICOS OF THE CHAVERO COLLECTION, PARTS 1 AND 2.—A series of paintings published by Alfredo Chavero in Mexico. The paintings reproduced in the first part should be most carefully studied in order to verify their authenticity.

A magnificent pre-Columbian codex preserved in a private library in England is now in press and is to be published by the

Peabody Museum, Harvard University, with a study of its contents by Mrs Zelia Nuttall, by whom it was discovered.

Two similar works of great value are soon to be published, namely :

(1) A post-Columbian codex preserved in the Biblioteca Nazionale, Florence, bearing the title *Life of the Indians*. It is on European paper, and most of the paintings have explanations in the Spanish language. This will be published by the Peabody Museum, Harvard University, with a study of the work by Mrs Zelia Nuttall.

(2) The Sahagun Codex, a series of post-Columbian paintings accompanying the Nahuatl text of Padre Sahagun's *Historia General de las Cosas de Nueva España*, as yet unpublished, will be reproduced by the Mexican government with a translation of the Nahuatl text by Sr Don Francisco del Paso y Troncoso.

Among the pre-Columbian codices published by Kingsborough, there still remain to be brought out in exact facsimile the following :

1. Original painting, collection of Sir Thomas Bodley ; in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. 40 pages.
2. Original painting, Selden collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford. 20 pages.
3. Original painting, Selden collection, Bodleian Library, Oxford. A roll making 12 pages in Kingsborough.
4. Codex Land, Bodleian Library, Oxford. 46 pages.
5. Vienna Codex, in Imperial Library, Vienna. 68 pages.
6. Codex Mendoza, a copy on European paper, Bodleian Library, Oxford.